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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 432nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 12 July 1994, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 48/82 OF 16 DECEMBER 1993 (continued):

- GENERAL DISCUSSION

- FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF NEW ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

- FUTURE ROLE OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE

1. Mr. ANSARI (India) welcomed the almost complete consensus on the continuing validity of the objectives laid down in the 1971 Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. Despite the end of the cold war, the foreign military presence in the region continued to have a destabilizing effect and should therefore be eliminated. The Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean should continue to focus on the search for alternative approaches to achieving the objectives of the 1971 Declaration, not alternative goals on which there was no consensus. That search must continue within the framework of the Committee, as any alternative methodology would detract from the Committee's importance. The importance of the cooperation and participation of the permanent members of the Security Council, the major maritime users and other interested States must be underlined, as it had been in the Committee's most recent report (A/48/29). His delegation therefore supported the proposal by the representative of Sri Lanka that the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee should consult with the non-participating permanent members of the Security Council and other major maritime users of the Indian Ocean with a view to encouraging their full participation in the Committee's deliberations. Without the participation of all the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users, the Committee would fail in its efforts to find new ways of ensuring peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region that were responsive to the changed international situation and consistent with the long-standing objectives of the Committee.

2. Mr. MUTHAURA (Kenya) said that his delegation was aware that the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace might contain references which were reminiscent of the cold war era. Nevertheless, the main goals remained valid and simply needed to be reinterpreted more liberally and pragmatically to reflect current international conditions. The improvement in the international political climate had provided new opportunities for strengthening international and regional peace, security and stability as well as new opportunities for the littoral and hinterland States, the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users to work together on the task of considering new approaches to achieving the goals contained in the Declaration. To that end, the Committee should develop a programme of work based on a step-by-step approach which would encourage the participation of all members of the Ad Hoc Committee. The experience of the negotiations on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea had shown that countries which had some initial reservations tended to be brought in at a later stage. Full participation and dialogue would be effective in building confidence in the region. Kenya believed that the development of regional cooperation not only in

the military and political fields but also in the socio-economic, scientific, environmental and other spheres should be envisaged, while bearing in mind the arrangements agreed upon under the Law of the Sea Convention, Agenda 21, the Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Cooperation Council (IOMAC) and other ongoing cooperation arrangements.

3. Mr. NKURLU (United Republic of Tanzania), after reviewing the history of the Indian Ocean question, said that the littoral and hinterland States should be the major players in the process of charting new alternative approaches to achieving the objectives of the 1971 Declaration, since it was those States which felt insecure and unstable because of external military involvement in the region. It was in that light that his delegation reiterated its support for the convening of a further meeting of the littoral and hinterland States to review progress made since the 1979 Meeting, which had been a turning-point in efforts to create a zone of peace in the area. His delegation also supported the proposals put forward by some delegations to hold workshops or seminars which would bring together a cross section of people in their personal capacity, and subsequently an international conference including extraregional States to harmonize the views of all interested parties. Lastly, it welcomed the positive political developments in South Africa and the imminent entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which should be an inspiration to the Committee and encourage those who had left the Committee to return to it.

4. Mr. LWATULA (Zambia) said that the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean must be parties to the deliberations and decisions of the Ad Hoc Committee. He therefore appreciated the presence of the delegations of China and the Russian Federation and hoped that the delegations of France, the United States and the United Kingdom would soon rejoin them.

5. A new climate of international cooperation had replaced the rivalries of the cold war. Zambia therefore supported the proposal by the Australian delegation to constitute an expert group on the Indian Ocean to consider ways of persuading the three permanent members which had thus far taken no part in the Ad Hoc Committee's deliberations to participate in its work once again.

6. The Committee should also use all possible regional, continental and international forums to discuss ways of achieving its objectives.

7. Ms. MENON (Singapore) said that her delegation would give positive consideration to any reasonable, feasible new approaches presented by the States concerned which were conducive to the establishment of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. That objective would require the efforts of States both within and outside the Indian Ocean region, who must base their relations with each other on mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. Her delegation reiterated the proposal it had made in 1993 that the Ad Hoc Committee should consider a treaty of amity and cooperation in the Indian Ocean as an interim, intermediate step. It also suggested that the countries of the region might consider signing non-aggression pacts with each other.

8. Mr. YASSIN (Sudan) said that the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and other States that used the Indian Ocean was of paramount importance to the Committee's work. His delegation appreciated the proposals by the delegation of Sri Lanka contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/49/203), particularly the idea of making the Ad Hoc Committee a forum for confidence-building among the littoral and hinterland States, since any regional arrangements to consolidate peace would no doubt benefit international peace.

9. His delegation also supported the proposal by Sri Lanka to convene a seminar of government experts to develop various approaches for cooperation in the region. Such forms of cooperation should be incorporated into political action in order to ensure the political will to implement them in a conference which his delegation believed was the ultimate forum for such work.

10. The CHAIRMAN said that besides his own introductory statement of 11 July 1994, 12 statements in all had been made at the present and the previous meetings. Since more than half of the Committee's members had attended the two meetings, it should be possible to hold an informal discussion on outstanding questions.

11. Most of the delegations that had spoken had done so along the lines of the consensus conclusions and recommendations contained in section III of the Committee's 1993 report (A/48/29). They had also been agreed that the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean should participate in the Committee's work.

12. As the representative of India had rightly pointed out, the Ad Hoc Committee had no need to look for new alternative goals, since its aim remained to bring peace, security and stability to the Indian Ocean region so that it could become a zone of peace. Having examined many different approaches to achieving that objective over the past 20 years, and taking into account the consensus which had emerged on many points among the different delegations, he intended to continue to look at new ways of bringing it about, particularly a step-by-step approach based on confidence which would facilitate the adoption, in successive stages, of global and regional steps in that direction.

13. He therefore proposed that the Committee should adjourn its meeting and reconvene informally to discuss the measures to be adopted. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Ad Hoc Committee agreed to his proposal.

14. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.